

## Guidelines for Managing Electronic Mail

Electronic mail has become the most prevalent tool for conducting business. According to a study in 2003, electronic mail messaging systems generate about 400,000 terabytes of new information each year worldwide. The study found that about 31 billion e-mail messages were sent daily in 2003 and it noted that that figure was expected to double by this year, 2006.<sup>1</sup>

E-mail has become the communications method of choice for many public officials and public employees in Arizona. Messages are often used as communication substitutes for the telephone as well as to transmit substantive information or records previously committed to paper and transmitted by more traditional methods. The management of e-mail messages that are public records affects nearly all functions on which a government agency is dependent for recordkeeping: privacy, administration, essential records management, administrative security, auditing, access, and archives.

In early 2004, the Records Management Division was approached by representatives of the Departments of Administration (DOA), Economic Security (DES), Environmental Quality (DEQ), and Health Services (DHS); and the Arizona Health Care Cost Containment System (AHCCCS) to provide guidance on managing their public records that were resident in their e-mail systems. The group had reviewed several other states' e-mail guidance and requested that we consider coming out with guidance similar in depth as those guidelines found in New Jersey, Ohio and Maine.

After working with this group, and vetting drafts to other stakeholders, such as Cities of Goodyear, Mesa, and Scottsdale; Maricopa County, and the University of Arizona, the State Library and Archives' Digital Government Information Cluster released two documents on January 2, 2006 addressing the management of public records made and received via e-mail: *Guidelines for Managing Public Records Sent and Received Via Electronic Mail* and *Managing Electronic Mail*. The *Guidelines* provide recommendations for the management (creation, maintenance, access and use, and disposition) of e-mail messages in accordance with state and federal legal requirements. *Managing Electronic Mail* provides more explicit detail on managing e-mail public records for the records manager. It discusses legal and retention requirements; best practices in filing messages, distribution lists, subject lines, sending confidential information, and storing and managing e-mail records, including permanent records; discovery and backup issues; access requirements; and defining responsibilities of agency personnel in the management of e-mail records.

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<sup>1</sup> Information about the study: HOW MUCH INFORMATION 2003? was produced by faculty and students at the School of Information Management and Systems at the University of California at Berkeley and can be found at: <http://www.sims.berkeley.edu:8000/research/projects/how-much-info-2003/index.htm>

GladysAnn Wells sent a letter out to every state agency director in early January 2006. The letter included a copy of the guidelines. The web-site version was posted on January 3, 2006. Since that time, we have sent out the guidelines via e-mail to local government contacts that we have for cities, counties and other political subdivisions. On March 15, 2006, a new general retention schedule for all state agencies and political subdivisions for records sent via e-mail was approved and posted to our web-site.

We have worked with, provided training for, or met with the Governor's Office, Auditor General's Office, AG's Office, ADOT, DHS, DES, DOA, Racing, Revenue, Water Resources, DOA, Osteopathic Board, Corrections, University of Arizona, Revenue, Weights and Measures, AHCCCS, ADOT-MVD, Arizona Lottery; Counties of Graham, Maricopa, Pima, and Pinal; Scottsdale Unified School District, and Cities of Scottsdale, Goodyear, Phoenix, and Tucson regarding our new e-mail guidelines.